

News From U.S. Senator

North Dakota

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DORGAN CALLS FOR FEDERAL/STATE TASK FORCE TO INVESTIGATE RISING GASOLINE PRICES

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) — U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) called on U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno Wednesday to form a federal-state joint task force to examine the sudden rise in gasoline prices in North Dakota and several other mid-western states. Dorgan asked that the task force include the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and state Attorneys General and that it work to determine whether energy industry pricing practices run afoul of state or federal laws.

"With the price of gasoline well over \$2.00 per gallon in some cities, we need answers now," Dorgan said. "These high prices place an incredible burden on farmers, rural communities, small businesses, and travelers. If prices are being artificially manipulated, we can and should put a stop to it."

In a letter to Reno also signed by Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell (R-CO), Dorgan pointed out that some of the increases in fuel prices are undoubtedly related to last year's reduction in oil production by members of the Organization of Petroleum Producing Countries (OPEC), environmental regulations and other factors such as increased summertime driving. However, he said, allegations have surfaced that high prices may also partly be due to price manipulation.

"The sharp increase in prices at the pump comes at a time when overall net income for 15 major petroleum companies has more than tripled," he wrote. "I urge you to investigate this problem with the combined law enforcement resources of the federal and state governments. Farmers, truck drivers, small businesses and other fuel consumers deserve to know that gasoline prices are not being artificially manipulated."

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